

725 University Avenue
Los Altos, CA
Secretary of the Interior's Standards Project Analysis



Interactive Resources
Project No. 2019-067

Report Date:
January 28, 2020

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Introduction

At the request of Eric and Lauren Albert, and their Architect Danielle DiVitorio, Interactive Resources, Inc. (IR) has prepared this Project Analysis Report to assess the proposed project at 725 University Avenue, Los Altos California, relative to its adherence to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties Standards (SOIS). The subject property is identified as an individual historic resource in the City of Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory, Section IV, resource number 75 as the Scheid Residence. The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate that the proposed work adheres to the SOIS applying the Rehabilitation Treatment.

Methodology

To prepare this SOIS Report, IR conducted a site visit on January 10th, 2020. Attending from IR was Charles Duncan, Preservation Architect. The purpose of the visit was to gather information on the property through direct observation, photograph the house, understand the neighborhood context and to gauge the nature of the proposed alterations. Background material was obtained by IR through the office of Di Vittorio Architecture and Design, the City of Los Altos Planning Department and the County of Santa Clara Assessor's office (via internet) and the City of Los Altos Historic Preservation website. In addition, the online Sanborn Map archive at the San Francisco Public Library was used to determine the site and neighborhood historical development. Information on the proposed project including scaled drawings and the proposed alterations was supplied by Di Vittorio Architecture and Design.

Descriptions

Vicinity Description

The property (APN 175-18-057) is located on the north side of University Avenue at the corner of Lee Street. The lot is approximately one-third of an acre. There is no Sanborn Fire Insurance Map available from the 1911 construction date of the house. The 1926 map of the neighborhood bounded by University Avenue to the south, Lincoln Avenue to the north and Washington Street to the east (limit of west boundary is not shown), appears to be a subdivision composed primarily of slightly less than one-quarter acre lots. In general, despite the subdivision, the neighborhood was sparsely developed. In 1926 the subject property was composed of three combined lots which is the current condition. Presently, the housing stock along this section of University Avenue appears to be built on two combined (original 1926) parcels and is predominately of post-World War II residential construction (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1 – 1926 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of the vicinity showing the property

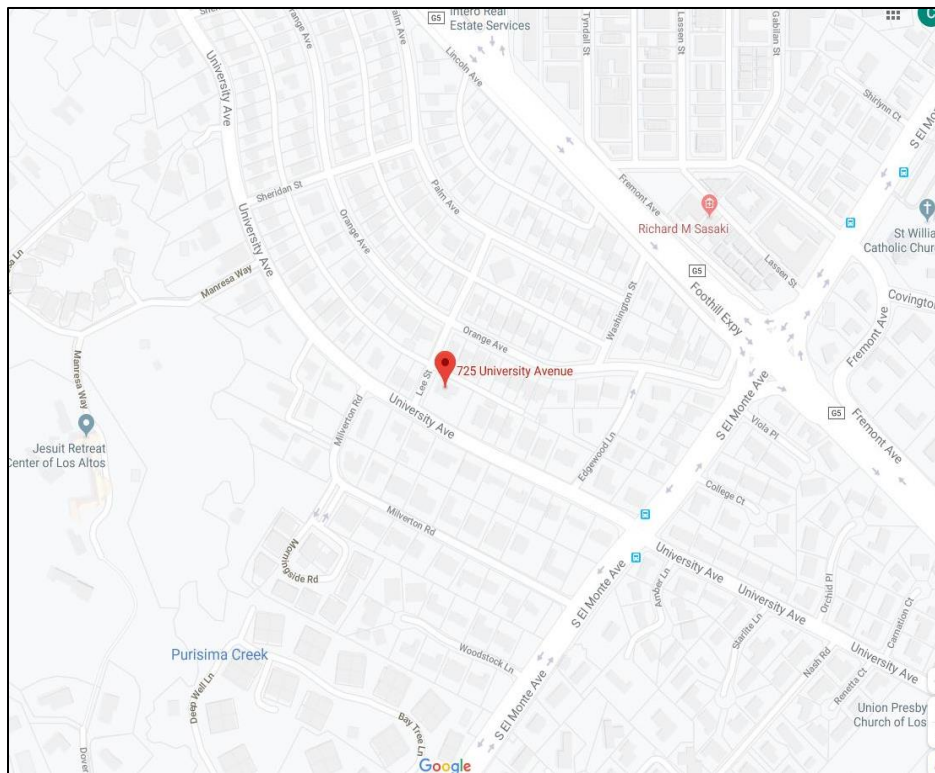


Figure 2 – Current Map of the vicinity (Google Maps)

Property and House Descriptions

Property: DPR forms completed by Circa: Historic Property Development in 2011 that the house was built in 1911 in the Craftsman Style. The house is situated well back from the street and close to the rear property line in the north-west quadrant of the property. At the extreme northwest corner is an ancillary building that shows up on the 1926 Sanborn Map. This may have been an early garage. The

remainder of the property is composed of an articulate, well designed series of pathways, patios, lawn and gardens with mature trees. Additionally, there is an arbor to the west constructed in 1988 and an adjacent shed. There are two entry points at the street forming a horseshoe shaped paved driveway. The site design and landscape work appear to be recent (Figures 3 and 4).

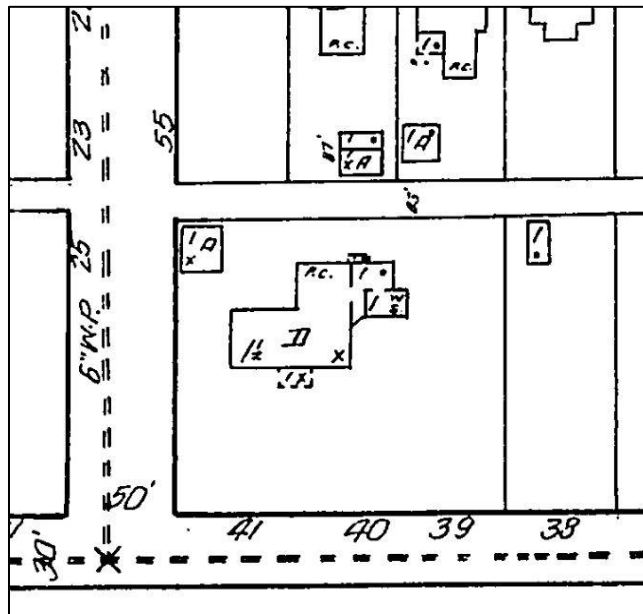


Figure 3 – 1926 Sanborn Map of the property

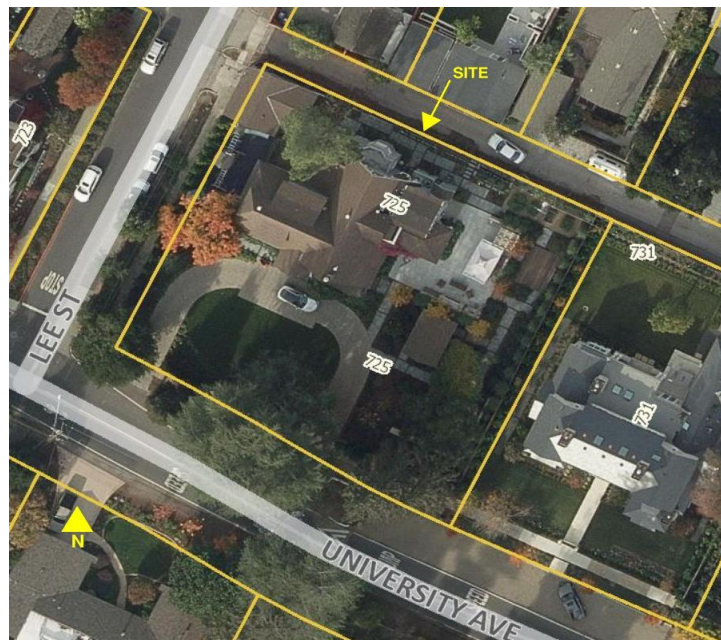


Figure 4 – Current satellite image of the site (County Assessor's Office)

House: The 2011 DPR forms description states:

"This large, rambling two-story Craftsman Style residence was completed in 1911. Typical of the style are the two front facing gables. More unusual for the style is the steeply pitched roof. The house is sheathed in painted wood shingles and the open eaves reveal exposed rafters and roof beam ends. A shed dormer with tripartite multi-pane window punctuates the front roof plane. Fenestration is a mix of multi-pane fixed, casement and double hung window. An addition appears to have been made to the back of the house."

In addition, the Character Defining Features are cited as follows:

"...two story form: two front facing gables: steeply pitched roof: painted wood shingle siding: open eaves with exposed rafters and roof beam ends: shed dormer with tripartite multi-pane window, multi-pane fixed, casement, and double-hung wood windows..."

Over time there have been numerous additions and alterations to the house. As stated above, additions have been made to the rear (north) of the house close to the property line. The 1926 Sanborn Map shows a one-story wing to the east of the main body of the house. It is unknown if this is original to the 1911 construction, or an early addition. Currently there is a second-story addition above the same approximate 1926 footprint with complex, and somewhat awkward roof geometries. At the front elevation (south), the gable end covered entry appears on the 1926 Sanborn, but the porch across the front extending to the east is a recent addition. It appears as an open rafter framework in the 2011 DPR photo and it has since been given a roof. Also, the prominent brick chimney and second story window are alterations to the original front elevation design made prior to the 2011 DPR forms. Overall, the house appears to be in excellent condition (Figures 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9).



Figure 5 – South (street view) elevation



Figure 6 – West elevation



Figure 7 – West half of North (rear) elevation



Figure 8 – East half of North (rear) elevation



Figure 9 – East elevation

Project Description

At the time of construction in 1911, it was common for turn of the twentieth century Craftsman houses of this type, with roofs that rose from the top plate of the first floor, to have large undeveloped, but finished spaces. The 1926 Sanborn Map identifies the house as 1 ½ stories. The project program is limited to alterations to the second floor which claim the undesignated volume as bedrooms with adjacent bathrooms. An unusual feature of the house is an isolated space resembling a tower, built over the first floor but unconnected to the second floor. The project proposes connecting this element with the main body of the second-floor space, including extending the roof to merge with the main north-south oriented roof (Figures 10 through 23). The existing and proposed floor plans and elevations are shown adjacent to each other for comparison. The plans and elevation are not to scale but rather are used as illustrations.

The project alterations are changes to the roof and elevations to the second story at the rear of the house.

1. Construction of a new dormer in the northwest corner of the main north-south roof including two new windows.
2. Extend existing roof of the unconnected second-story addition to the west to engage the east side of the main north-south roof. Make a second-story addition connection linking the previously unconnected spaces. Alter existing window on north (back) elevation. Turn an existing door on the south (front facing side) of this area into a window.
3. Add two skylights to the east face of the main north-south roof at the south end, on the eastern slope.

For the most part, the proposed alterations are not visible from the street, and will not compromise the historic character of the house.

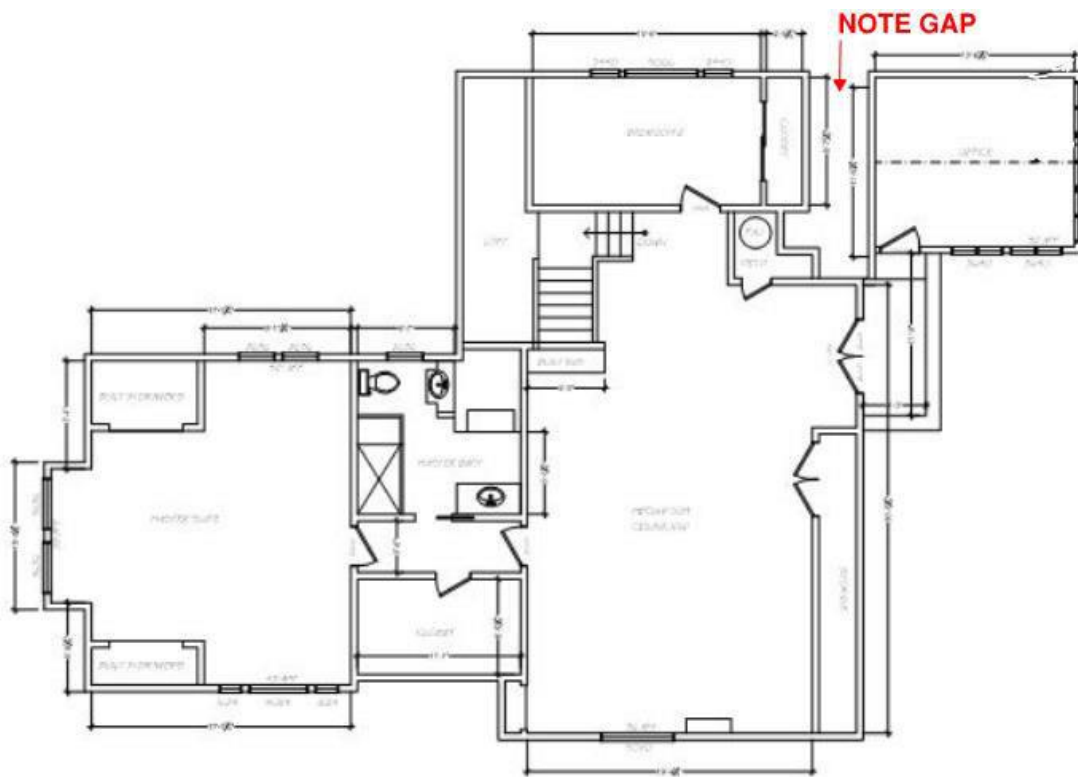


Figure 10 – Existing second floor plan

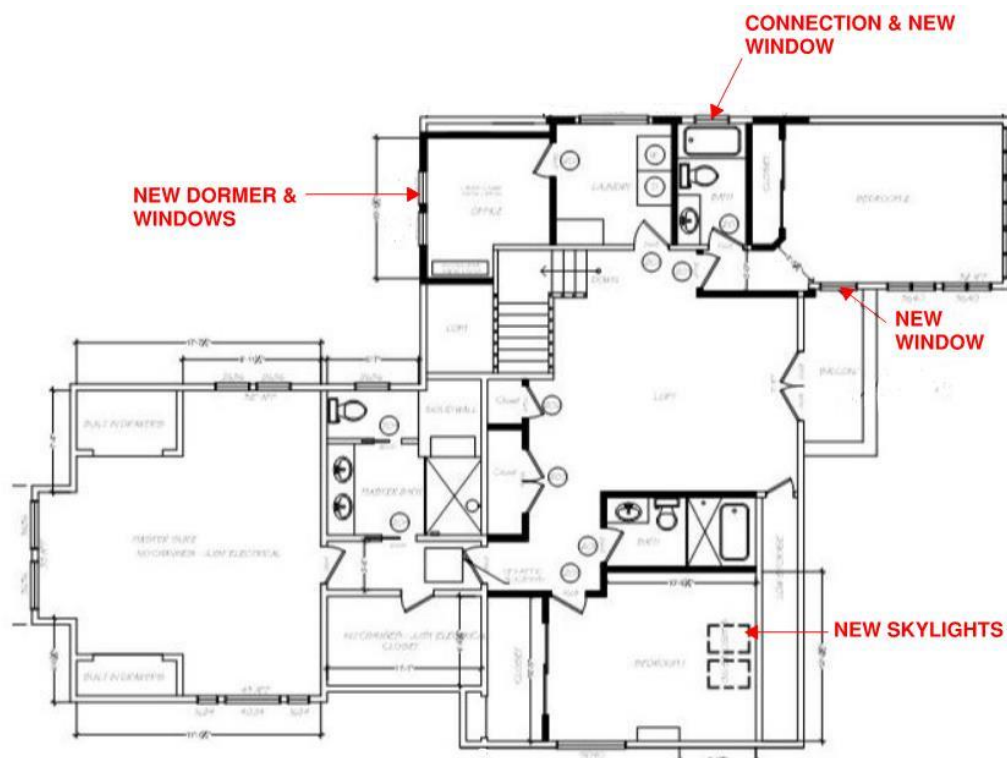


Figure 11 – Proposed second floor plan

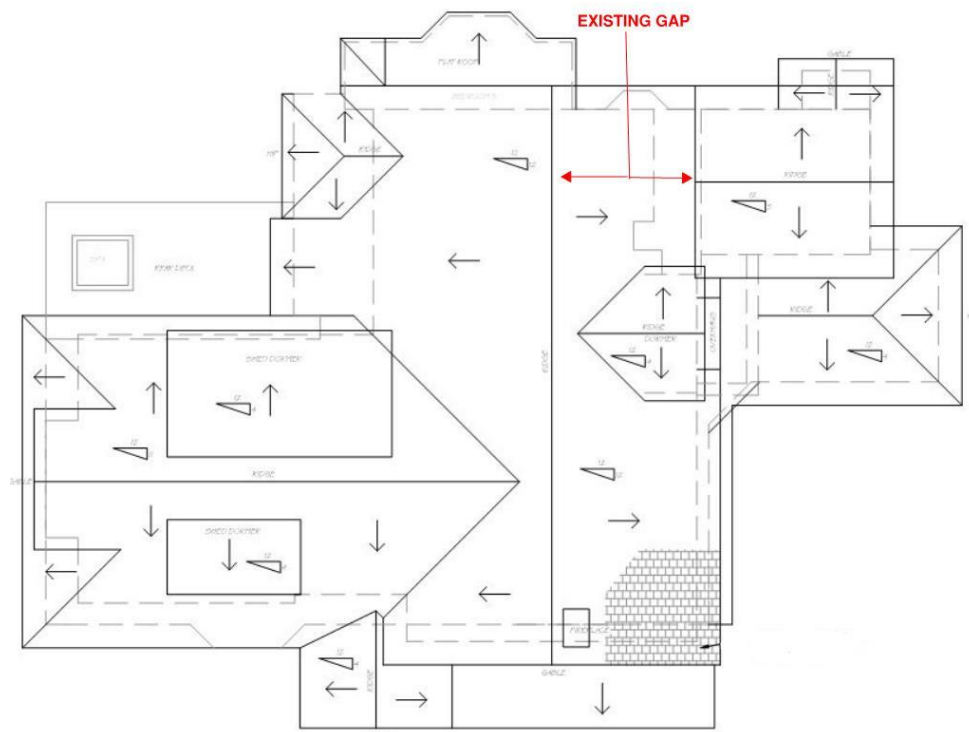


Figure 12 – Existing roof plan

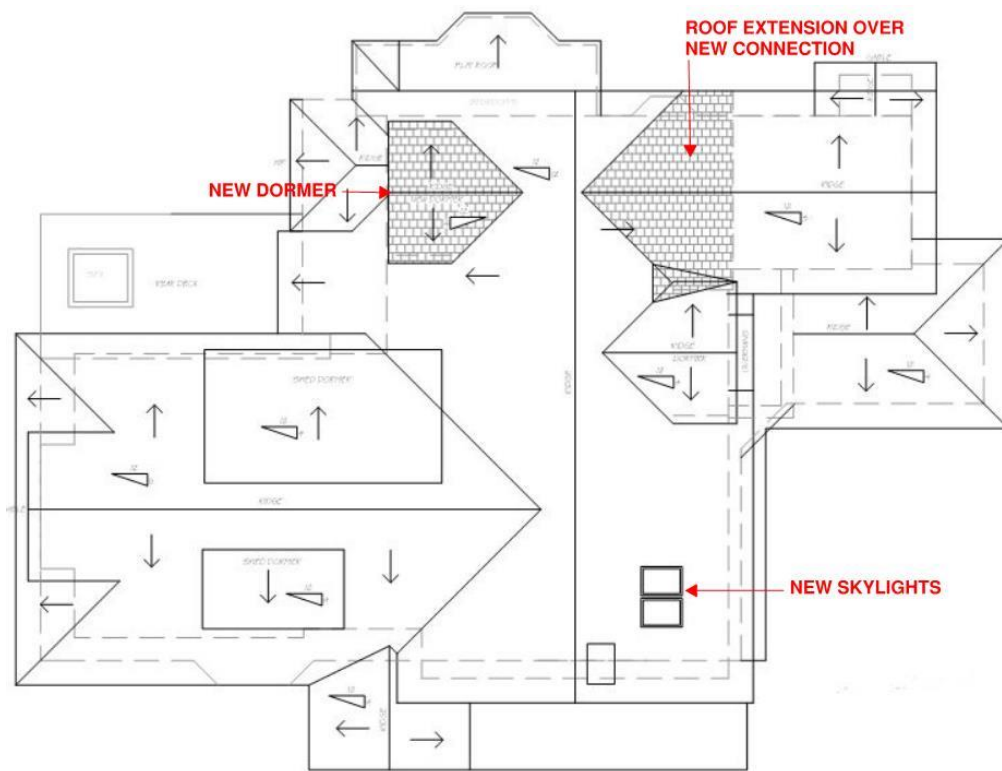


Figure 13 – Proposed roof plan



Figure14 – Existing South (front) elevation



Figure 15 – Proposed South (front) elevation

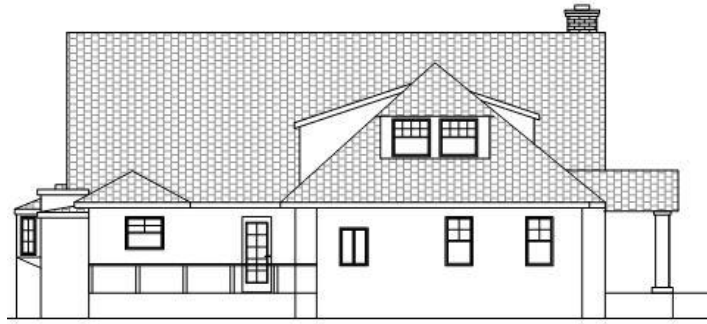


Figure 17 – Existing West elevation

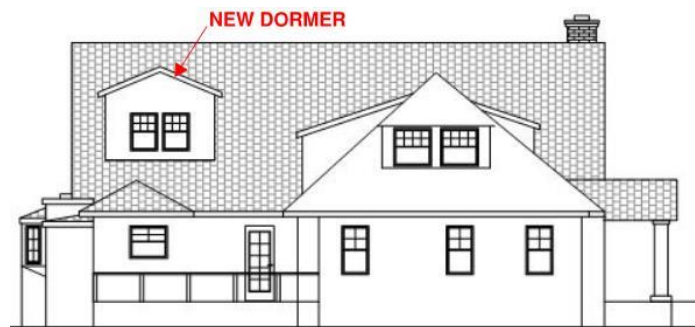


Figure 18 – Proposed West elevation

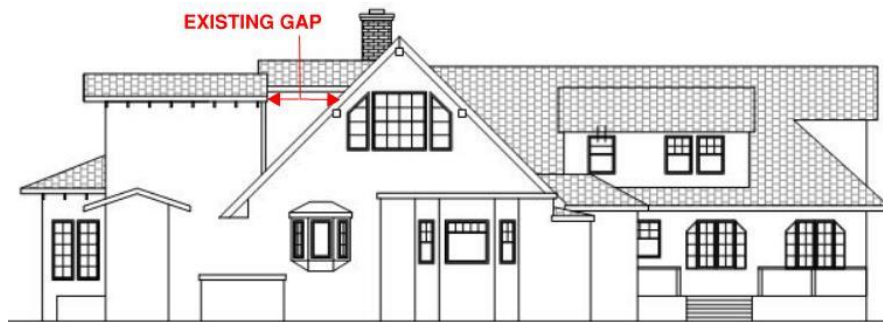


Figure 19 – Existing North (rear) elevation



Figure 20 – Proposed North (rear) elevation



Figure 21 – Existing East elevation



Figure 22 – Proposed East elevation



Figure 23 – Proposed East elevation photo showing new skylights (photoshop)

Consistency with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards

Regulatory Setting

In accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), any proposed work on properties appearing on a historical inventory at the local, state or federal level, should be done in compliance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (Weeks and Grimmer, 1995).

The subject property is identified as an historic resource in the City of Los Altos Historic Inventory. As it is currently understood, the proposed work involving the alterations to 725 University Avenue qualifies as a Rehabilitation project as defined by the *Secretary's Standards and Guidelines*:

The Secretary of the Interior defines Rehabilitation as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural value.

The *2017 CEQA Statute and Guidelines* publication states that a proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment if it would create "an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource." Specifically, substantial adverse changes include "physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired" (*CEQA Guidelines* section 15064.5(b)(1)).

The *2017 CEQA Statute and Guidelines* publication further states that:

"Generally, a project that follows the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for... Rehabilitating... Historic Buildings* or the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (1995) shall be considered as mitigated to a level of less than a significant impact on the historical resource (*CEQA Guidelines* section 15064.5(b)(3))."

A project's impact on a historic resource may be considered less than significant if the project is implemented in accordance with the Secretary's Standards.

Project Analysis using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties – Rehabilitation Treatment

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

Commentary: This application assumes the structure's continued use as a single-family residence. The proposed alterations to the second floor are required to capture additional interior overhead space and light. Apart from the skylights on the gable end, east facing roof, the alterations will not be visible from the street and they will not change the defining characteristics of the building nor its site and environment.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

Commentary: The mass, scale and in general the historic fabric will be unchanged by the project. All other proposed work is minor, additive and will involve no alteration of spaces or features associated with the site beyond the house footprint.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

Commentary: The limited project scope only includes an additional dormer and a roof extension at the rear of the house and skylights toward the front. The project seeks to maintain the historic integrity of the house with minimally invasive upgrades. Stylistically, these will be compatible with the original fabric. The scheme does not add conjectural features or elements from other buildings.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

Commentary: The property has experienced additions and alterations to the rear and eastern rear portion of the house. These, for the most part appear to be fairly recent —less than fifty years old. The mass, footprint and major rooflines are largely original and The DPR forms indicate that the property maintains its historic integrity. These elements will not be affected by the project. There are no apparent changes that have acquired historic significance.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

Commentary: The general appearance of the 1911 house is intact. The limited scope of the project results in the natural preservation of the construction techniques features, finishes and examples of the turn of the twentieth century carpenters craft. All proposed work is additive and occurs only on the roof.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

Commentary: As stated above, the built fabric of the house is original. It has been well maintained over time and deterioration is not evident based upon visual inspection. If material deterioration is found during construction every effort will be made to repair the element in situ. If the extent of deterioration requires replacement, it will occur in-kind.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

Commentary: Because the work is limited to the roof, there will be no physical or chemical treatments that will affect the wood shingle or wood trim.

8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

Commentary: The project scope does include foundation work or landscaping that would affect the site. Because the ground was disturbed previously in 1911, and subsequently with landscape improvements, it is unlikely that undisturbed archeological resources are present at the site.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

Commentary: The scope of this project does not include additions or related new construction that will destroy historic materials because the work is additive. The massing, size and scale of the building will retain its original 1911 residential character. The new roof dormer to the north west will be similar in size to the existing dormers which are likely also earlier additions. The roof extension to the east will connect with the main north-south roof bringing order to a chaotic series of roof conditions. This work is minor, and will not be visible from the street, allowing for the overall maintenance of historic character. Skylights at the south end of the roof, which are low profile, are being used rather than a dormer to preserve the character defining gable ended roof line and overall mass of the elevation.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Commentary: Because all the proposed work is additive without the elimination of any existing element of the house, the original building fabric will not be materially altered by project. All proposed work can be reversed.

Conclusion and Finding

Under CEQA, a project's impact on a historic resource may be considered less than significant if the project is implemented in accordance with the Secretary's Standards.

Based on the above analysis, the proposed design appears to be consistent with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties – Rehabilitation Treatment.

Consultant Qualifications

Pursuant to Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61, the author, Charles Duncan meets the Secretary of the Interior's qualification standards for professionals in historic architecture and architectural history.

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